Advocating for Social Science at Home

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COSSA Science Policy Conference

March 29, 2017
Why Advocate at Home?

- Members of Congress are often less busy at home and more focused on engaging with constituents.
- To build on any positive momentum and relationship building from a visit that took place on Capitol Hill.
- Local engagement gives congressional staff a better understanding of constituent concerns:
  - Ability to see how federal dollars support local programs/projects.
  - Opportunity to meet with voters affected by decisions made in Washington.
- Can provide positive local press.
Steps to Get Involved in Advocacy

☐ Tell your story!
  - Participate in a Capitol Hill Day
  - Email your Senators/Representative
  - Invite your elected officials to visit your lab
  - Visit their state/district office

☐ Get the word out to the public
  - Write a letter to your local newspaper
  - Be a resource for reporters
  - Tweet about science policy issues
  - Contribute articles to your society newsletter

☐ Teach or mentor in your community

☐ Volunteer at a local science museum

☐ Involve students, young scientists, and patients in advocacy
Advocacy Best Practices

**DO**
- Make your research relatable
- Identify connections with your elected officials – college, church, hometown, volunteer group, etc.
- Get contact information for key staff aides in Washington & local/state offices
- Subscribe to newsletters from your elected officials
- Connect with your elected officials on social media
- Attend town hall meetings
- Document visits with elected officials (with photos!)

**DON’T**
- Give a science lecture or “pop quiz”
- Recite your CV
- Use scientific jargon/ overly technical language
- Rely on stereotypes based on political affiliation or past statements
- Argue
- Get discouraged
FASEB Has Resources for YOU!

Learn how to be an effective advocate

Discover how research is funded in your state and district

Read about biomedical breakthroughs
Tips For Contacting Members of Congress

- Address one issue in each message/call; include it in the subject line
  - “FY 2017 Budget: Increase Funding For NIH”

- Make a specific request, identify the bill/issue you are writing about, and state your purpose for writing in the first sentence
  - “I am writing to request that you support increasing NIH funding to $34 billion in the Fiscal Year 2017 omnibus appropriations bill (HR 1234)”

- Clearly state your position on the bill/issue
  - “An increase in FY 2017 is critical to sustain the prior investment in medical research and take advantage of new scientific opportunities”

- Include 2-3 relevant points and explain why you support/oppose the bill/issue
  - Use data from FASEB factsheets
  - Tell a personal story

- Include your postal address in the message/call

- Keep it short, polite, and to the point

- Use proper grammar and punctuation in email
Emailing Your Senators/Representative

- Sign-Up to receive FASEB action alerts

- Sending an email only takes 5 minutes and one click

- Online form identifies your Senators and Representative based on your zip code

- You can customize your message to your legislators
Meeting Tips & Reminders

☐ Introduce all participants
  ■ Name and institution/affiliation – not entire CV!

☐ Get to the “ask”/ message quickly
  ■ Follow up with relevant state/local data
  ■ Share a personal story
  ■ Explain why the issue matters to their constituents

☐ Describe how you can be of assistance

☐ If you don’t know an answer to a question:
  ■ Say “I don’t know but I will get back to you with the answer”

☐ Offer your business card or contact information

☐ Get contact information from the person you met with

Remember that a meeting is only one step toward building a relationship with your elected officials!
Follow-Up From Your Meetings

☐ Send thank you notes
  ■ Via email is best
  ■ Add your contact information

☐ Include any follow-up information you promised
  ■ Links to online documents work best
  ■ Avoid sending large PDF’s/files

☐ Remind staff/members about any outstanding requests or information they promised to get for you
Congress must commit to science funding in budget talks

By Guest opinion, on October 22, 2015 at 10:45 AM, updated October 22, 2015 at 10:48 AM

By Louis B. Justement, PhD, and Mary-Ann Bjornstig, PhD

Louis B. Justement, PhD, is Professor of Microbiology, Director of the Graduate Biomedical Sciences Immunology Graduate Theme, and Associate Director for the Medical Scientist Training Program in the UAB School of Medicine.

Mary-Ann Bjornstig, PhD, is Professor and Chair of the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, Program Leader of Cancer Cell Biology, and Associate Director for Translational Research at the Comprehensive Cancer Center at UAB.

Federally funded research is foundation for our future

By Helene Cooper / From April 23, 2016

A white-coated crew, 20,000 strong, is heading in San Diego to join their home-based brothers and sisters. These biomedical researchers unite to learn, exchange, and learn. They are for the Experimental Biology 2016 conference on April 23 to present discoveries that could dramatically improve human health. They are on the cutting-edge of drug development, disease biology, research, and therapy. They are a free, federal-supported force in research and in the future.

THE BALTIMORE SUN

NIH cuts threaten Baltimore research

By Neil Risch, Hal Dietz

October 6, 2016, 1:20 PM

If you end up near the Baltimore Convention Center this week, you may notice crowds of people carrying black and teal tote bags. The American Society of Human Genetics is meeting there through Saturday, bringing 8,000 researchers, clinicians, and ethicists from more than 60 countries to the city.
Rep. Mark Pocan’s (D-WI) District Director visited research labs at UW-Madison
Visit followed a meeting with the district staffer
Discussed how federal money supports UW-Madison labs
Also explained how immigration laws affect science

PhD candidate at Univ. of Arkansas sent an email to his Rep. Steve Womack (R-AR)
Rep. Womack replied to the email and asked to visit the student’s lab
Rep. Womack toured the lab and learned how exercise science research supports and refutes claims and can be used to inform policy makers
For More Information…

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